Poetry of the Period.

[The manner in which John Hay and his imitators have attributed to the hard-handed backwoodsman and the bluff and impecunious pioneer an instinctive admiration for romantic religion, and a yearning after justice highly tempered with mercy, has induced our Head Devil to to perpetrate the following verses. Save that the poem is a little more elegant in its diction, somewhat less disgusting in the narrative, and not nearly so blasphemous in its conclusion, it may take high rank with "Little Breeches," "Prairie Bell," and similar "dialectic" abominations. The H. D. has called his poem after the juvenile hero of the piece:]

RED-HEAD JAKE.

"Hyar! let that little cub alone!
He's mine, he are; ef you tech h'm
I'll bust your crust with this jawbone,
What I yanked out er Bret's Ah Sin.

"'Red har!' It are leerle red;
Redder'n hell-fire, bet your life!
He got it fair from Sallie Shed,
For which I swapped my t'other wife.

"Peart! ain't he, stranger, hay?
Yer ought to see him gouge an' fight!
He sluiced an eye out, t'other day,
From Kernal Gift's old nigger Night.

Only fifteen last Fo'th July,
An' pow'ful strong on poker straight;
Kin rassle with Kentucky Rye,
Wus nor Booth nor General Haight.

"Poor little cuss! He's too dam smart;
He histed my big axe one day
An' bust his mam just where the part
Of her red hair was growin' gray.

"'Twas neatly done: a clear, clean split
Right through her nose; she never spoke;
But o'er the washtub keeled an' quit
Me an' Jake—an' me flat broke.

"'Twan't fair, but then I wasn't riled:
I was stuck so bad for the boy, you see.
An' I tell yer, stranger, that this hyar child
'll git up Thar belo' you an' me."

MY NEIGHBOR'S SHOES.

A CHRISTMAS SKETCH.

The children were put to bed at last. Six of them, with unquenchable spirits, full of the fun and noise of the time, but riotous and mutinous now. No stockings to be hung up!—and this, Christmas Eve. Well, then, a Christmas tree on the morrow!

"No; we are beggars," I had said with a sort of savage pleasure in making them as miserable as myself, "and beggars don't have Christmas trees."

And little Meg had burst into a passion of tears. "A beggar! And must she go out with a basket and eat potato peelings and stale crusts. Oh, oh!"

I quieted the storm I had raised as well as I could. After all, it was a poor satisfaction to have made them unhappy. My head ached and my heart ached worse as I went down stairs. My work was not over, although I had no festive preparations for to-morrow, no turkey waiting to be stuffed, no plum-pudding to concoct. There were piles of little garments to be overlooked and mended. How sick it made me to see the rents and symptoms of wearing-out in them. What would become of us all? I felt a dull despair coming over me. It was no use working, trying to stem the tide of misfortune that was setting in. No use!

I went to the window and looked out. A clear, star-lit sky gleamed above; a frosty road, white and glittering, below, save where the gay sleds, with tinkling bells and rich robes and laughing freight, had cut a path for themselves. What a joyful time! All the world seemed to be happy. Fathers were hurrying along, with odd, bulgy bundles and dainty-colored cornucopias. Mothers, who had come out at the last moment for stuff to fill the little stockings, went by, with a secret joy illuminating their faces. I could catch a glimpse of the great store at the corner—all one blaze of light. I knew how the polished, red apples were set out there, and the great baskets of brown nuts and the bunches of white grapes, transparent in the light, golden with other suns than ours, and the boxes of raisins, in rich clusters and the jars of lucent honey or ruby jelly—I knew them all, and how they looked this night.

Strange, how such trifles haunt us in the presence of real sorrow. Real want tared us in the face; yet the bitterest rop in the cup seemed to be the fact that I could not make this one day festive for the children. John had lost his situation; not from incompetence or fault on his part, but times were dull and the master had too many hands. We had too many hands, too, and too many mouths to feed, but could not turn them off because the times were dull.

I stood looking out into the bright, frosty night with rebellious heart. Three tall houses rose in front of me, lit in every costly plate-glass window. Elegant brown stone houses they were, with lace and damask curtains, and glimpses, sometimes, of satin-covered chairs, or buhl cabinets, or Chinese monsters, in porcelain, or Sevres vases. Further than these glimpses I did not know my neighbors' houses. My neighbors I had seen as they came out in their elegant silks and stepped into their splendid carriages. There was Mrs. Terhune, the banker's wife; Mrs. Ray, the prim, elderly-looking person, who had only been married a year to the handsome, young husband—had bought him with her money, people said, and Mrs. Crosswell, the fat plebeian, whose husband had made a fortune in the war, in the manufacture of ropes, and whose elegant daughter and son outran fashion in their attire.

I looked enviously at these stately mansions now. How unequally things were divided in this world, I thought, with bitterness, and wondered how I could ever have been happy in the mean, miserable way in which we lived, at best. What a fool I had been to dream of love and a limited income together? What a drag? What a "demnition grind," as Mr. Mantilini says, "life had been," to be sure. I laughed bitterly as I thought of it. John was all kindness, it is true, but what time did we have, even to enjoy one another's society. Work, work, work!—grim-faced god or devil—holding us apart. Then I remembered that we would have plenty of time now to be together, and starve!

"I wish I were only in my neighbor's shoes," I cried, aloud, in a dull despair, as I dropped the curtain and went over to the pile of worn little garments. Ah, me! If I could change places!

What ailed the light? It was only a common candle at first, but it seemed to lift itself up and branch off into a great chandelier, and out into white lilies; in each cup was a golden spike of flame. I rubbed my eyes and looked around. What a room! The carpet lay soft and green as moss under my feet—golden-green moss, with pink roses and blue forget-me-nots and May lilies strewn over it, and curtains of amber satin fell from the windows, and lace drifted over them like clouds over sunshine. Somehow, I was not astonished at the splendor. Why should I be? I looked in the glass and recognized the face very well. I was Mrs. Ray, a tall, angular-looking person, with a sallow face, very much powdered. Under a coquettish French cap with rose-colored ribbons, I saw a few grey hairs.

"I must find out a better dye," I thought.

My dress of sea-green silk swept the velvet carpet as I walked. Books with costly bindings lay about, and pictures—sweet bits of summer harvest fields, or storm-beaten coasts, or Roman skies, with grey ruins. But I looked at none. I only paced the room with restless steps, till a door opened. A handsome man, in full evening dress, loked in. He hardly glanced at me, as he buttoned one of his lavender kids by the light.

"Well, by-by, Catkins," he said, carelessly.

"Out again, George," I said, dismally.

"Yes. Why not?"

"Oh, I am so lonely! And this is Christmas night."

"All the more reason for a fellow's being jolly," he said.

"And some reason, I hope, for his wife's being jolly," I answered, trying hide a heavy heart under a smile, and, going up to him, I put my arm around him and kissed him.

"Oh, how deuced affectionate you are, Catkins!" he said, wafting a handkerchief, heavy with odor of violet, over his face.

"We've only been married a year," I said, pitifully. "Other husbands always kiss their wives when they leave them."

"Please not call me that odious name," I said, growing angry. "I should think you could remember that a year ago you had not a cent to bless yourself with."

"Nor a wife to bless me," he answered, gaily, with a careless smile. "Kathleen Mavourneen, the grey dawn is breaking."

"Where are you going?" I asked, pettishly.

"I go where glory waits me," he answered; "in other words, to the club."

"Where punch and cigars wait you, George. I shall join a club."

"Do! A Sorosis."

"I am so lonely; I don't know what to do with my time."

"Count your laces, and look over the cashmere shawls. By-by."

And he was gone. How handsome he had looked in the full blaze of light from the gas! What splendid deep, deep blue eyes! what golden brown curls! Ah me! how my heart ached as I pictured him! And he was so cold to me! Had he shuddered—actually shrank from my kiss? He never spent an evening at home now—never. I could sit in my palatial rooms alone, and sigh my time away. What did I care for the splendors? to be loved was more precious than all. If I could buy that—the love of one true heart—how gladly would I give all for that pearl of price! Oh, miserable fate! Hell on earth to be an unloved wife.

My foot touched something in my hurried walk. It was a cigar-case—a handsome Russian-leather one with George's monogram in gilt letters on the back. I recognized one of the presents I had lavished upon him, and turned it over idly in my hand—opened it as idly. Chance or Providence—which? Ah, how my heart beat! There lay a dainty little note on rose-colored paper, and some faint Indian scent rose up, with sickening fragrance to my nostrils. I opened the billet. This was it, and the date was the 24th:

"MY DARLING—You will come, my own love, this evening. I am sure of it, though you said last night you feared your Tabby wouldn't let you off. Think of the eternity it will be to me if you stay away. 'Would I were with thee every day and hour.' Christmas Eve, too! The bracelet, beautiful as it is, will not do instead of your own dear self. The very thought of seeing you makes my heart throb. Oh, my angel! what a terrible fate has built up this wall between us! We belong to each other, spite of the world's laws—do we not? We have a higher law. We can legislate for our hearts? Your own

ADELE."

I read this over twice, and found myself gasping aloud—a horrible choking sound, at which I grew frightened when I heard it. "Am I going to die?" I said. "No, I will not die and leave him to happiness with his guilty love! Oh, George! George!" And it seemed as if the anguish of death entered my soul—I loved this man, this unworthy wretch, so much.

I held the billet crushed in my hand till the nails entered the flesh, yet I felt no pain. Every feeling of sense was paralyzed, but the terrible heart-pangs went on. I knew now why he could not spend the evening with me. I pictured this Adele—a rose blond, perhaps; fresh, with golden hair. I looked at my face in the glass again, where time had written wrinkles. Ah! that way madness lay.

How many hours did I pace that room, I wonder, the gas burning at full height, kindling the amber curtains and rose-strewn carpet as for a long feast? Ah, a feast of apples of Sodom! He came at last. I saw the ormulu clock pointed at two. The door into the hall stood open, and he looked in, not expecting to see me, for he started back as if he had met a ghost. How haggard and old I must have looked after that vigil!

"Why, Catkins, old girl, what has has happened?" he asked.

I walked toward him in a sort of frenzy, and shook the pink-scented billet in his face. "It has happened that you are a liar and infamous," I cried; or rather it has happened that I have discovered it this night."

He glanced at the paper—at the open cigar-case, and I saw his countenance change.

"Why, hang it! do you pry?—do you spy on me, madame?"

"Oh, you will carry it off with a high hand, will you?" I exclaimed. "No, I do not spy; I find the proof of your guilty love under my feet—in this house, which you profane with your presence. What have you to say?"

"You take the thing too seriously," he said, glancing about, and taking inventory, as it were, of the splendors that surrounded him—all mine. "In fashionable life this thing is——"

"Don't talk to me so!" I cried; "don't dare to believe I can listen calmly. You do not love me; why do you pretend to?—false, perjured liar! Because you coveted wealth! That bought you; and I, poor doting fool ——"

I was choked with the torrent of anguish that flooded my soul. A darkness swept between me and the handsome face that had been my bane. A black gulf seemed to open to receive me; I sank into it, and knew no more.

I opened my eyes on a different scene. I sat at a handsome breakfast table, pouring out coffee for a red-haired man who sat opposite me, absorbed in the morning paper. I had fat, pudgy hands, I noticed, covered with rings, and I wore a gay cashmere wrapper with scarlet cord and tassels. The distorted reflection of my face in the silver showed a very wide mouth, and small grey eyes, and dusty auburn hair under a Honiton cap. There were two empty Sevres china cups waiting.

"Take the partridges back," I said to the servant; "Miss Laura and Mr. Charles will breakfast in their rooms."

The red-haired gentleman looked up with an oath:

"Don't swear before the servants," I said, "its vulgar."

"What's the reason Laura and Charles are never here to breakfast, then—think of our havin' breakfast in bed in our young day—this generation are all goin' to perdition."

"They were up so late last night," I said. "Reflect Mr. Grosswell, if you will have them mix with the aristocracy."

"Hang the aristocracy. I suppose, as that smirking waiter's out, there's no sin in swearing. I know they're wearin' out their young lives in a round of dissipation. Look at Charles, he's as pale as a dish-cloth."

"How inelegant," I said. "Charles is distingue. I own I am worried about his health."

"I'll send the doctor round to-day. If he's unable to sit up to his breakfast, he's in a bad way. Hollo! hemp's riz," and he was soon buried in his paper again.

How little appetite I had for that dainty breakfast. The partridge, the omelets of tempting golden brown, the yellow muffins, the rich aromatic coffee, in the costly cup of Sevre—all was tasteless to me. I had a heart too anxious and full to allow of appetite, though I seemed to remember a past when a bit of bread had been relished with more pleasure than all these delicacies.

We had toiled, then, in those old days, and spared, and eat little and slept little for the children. We had struggled up in the world. We had educated them for higher places. Fortune had come at last, and how was it with them. I went up to Laura's door and knocked gently. She was never in a very pleasant temper after a ball, but it was very late. How she had danced with that dissipated young Wynkoop last night spite of my frowns and hints. She has not the slightest regard for my advice, considering me old-fashioned and unenlightened. Ah, me!

I sighed as I knocked again. Then turning the knob, found to my surprise that the door was not fastened. She must have gone down then. I went in.

A pretty little nest it was, in white and silver, with blue silk curtains. Laura was a blonde, and she had chosen the color. The light seemed dim to me, for the curtains were down; but in a moment I saw plainly that the bed was freshly made, the great ruffled pillows were in their places—or, a great pang smote me like a blow—Laura had not slept there the past night!

I looked around feeling a deadly faintness come over me, and clung to one of the chairs for support. There lay her ball-dress yet, the flowers and ribbons, but the jewels were gone. I rang for the maid—a smirking French thing, of whom I was half afraid. I was sure when I looked in her face she knew all. I felt too that she would tell me nothing.

"Where is Miss Laura?" I cried in an agitated voice.

Florine looked around with feigned surprise.

"Mon Dieu! is she not here; then in the garden perhaps?"

I forgot my fear. "You hussy!" I cried, "tell me what you know; you must know something."

"Madam forgets herself," she answered, drawing herself up with dignity. "What am I to tell?"

"You know, very well, my daughter is not here. Where is she?" Florine was looking about, and now pretended to discover a note on the dressing-table.

"This can tell you better," she said, handing it to me.

I tore it open with trembling hands. Yes, it was in Laura's writing.

"DEAR MOTHER—When you read this I shall be far away with one I love better than life. I know your prejudices, but you will get over them for my sake. Harry says, when it's all fixed beyond altering, papa will be sure and come round. He is devoted to me, and you must forgive him and me. He will be at the Columbia Hotel, a week from to-day, and then I shall have been a long time—a week of happiness. Yours,

"LAURA WYNKOOP."

Oh! the wicked undutiful child! How sharp the agony that wrung my heart as I read! She for whom we had toiled and worn away our best days had forsaken us for a worthless adventurer whom she had known a month. My pride was broken, my hopes were shattered. And I thought of her future, too, with that miserable spendthrift. The thorny bed she had made for herself. I groaned aloud. Ah! how happy the old days had been when we lived in obscurity, and my Laura played about me, and clung to me with love. Now she had grown to despise her mother, to laugh at her simple ways, to be utterly worldly and hard-hearted; and this was the end. I sat dowd too weak to move, and sent a messenger to her father. I know I should get cold comfort there, but it was necessary for him to know. Charles, too, poor boy!

How ghastly he looked as he came out.

"Is it true, Laura is gone?" he asked.

"Yes," I sobbed, "wretched girl, she is gone."

"A pretty mess she's made of it," he answered, "there's no stopping it, is there?"

"No, it's too late, I suppose. Oh! that I should have lived to see this day. Are you sick, Charles?"

"Nothing more than usual," he said, "a sort of sinking."

"You must give up late hours," I cried, with new anxiety. "The doctor said so long ago."

"Bother the doctor! All I need is a stiffener this morning," and he went to the sideboard and poured out a glass of brandy and drank it like water. "There, now I'm all right."

"All wrong, you mean! Oh, Charles, it looks sad for a young man to need that before breakfast; if I thought you were going to be a drunkard, I'd rather see you dead before me. You don't know the agony——" My heart was so full that I could speak no more, but ended with a fresh burst of tears.

Charles did not seem softened at my tears—he looked angry instead. "What the mischief is the storm about?" he said, "You're put out about Laura, who's made a confounded fool of herself, and you visit it on me. Don't get in the doleful dumps over nothing, mother—I'm not sliding down a greased plank to perdition just yet."

The door opened, and our family doctor walked in. He was an old friend, and so there was little ceremony with him. Charles was polite, and answered questions and submitted to an examination with better grace than I expected. "It's mother's fancy," he said, laughing, "but I think there's something not quite right with my heart; it kicks up oddly, and sometimes makes such a spring I think its going to bolt altogether." I watched the doctor's face throughout—with agony—but I could not read it. I followed him out. I had almost forgotten Laura in this new anxiety.

"Well?" I gasped, as we stood quite alone in the hall.

"You must prepare for some serious words, Mrs. Crosswell——"

"The worst—let me know the worst."

"Your boy is killing himself with dissipation," he said, solemnly. "Can you not send him away. I do not say it will save him, but there is a chance. He has a heart disease, to which late hours and wine, and all excitement, are as deadly poison."

I sat down in the hall after the door was shut, and moaned as one in the olden time. "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." What grief seemed like my grief—what value had anything earthly—any of the baubles for which I had toiled. How I would hate them all when Charles was gone. Yes! already I saw myself alone in the house, and my children were not.

"Then one weeps—then one kneels,
God! how the house feels!"

The door burst open with a jar. I knew that impetuous step, and shrank back a little. I saw Mr. Crosswell's face scarlet with passion.

"Well, madam," he cried, "I hope you're satisfied with your work."

"My work?" I faltered.

"Yes—yours—yours! Who so anxious to get into society—to have a fine house like the nobs—to send Laura into the heartless, godless set, whose only thought is fashion, and outshining their neighbors, like so many vipers, each trying to get their head above the others. Did I approve of it—or care for it—say?"

There was a little truth in what he said—quite enough to give it a sting. But oh! how cruel to give me this new pang, and at such a time. I had done all for the best, according to my poor, benighted vision. Could I see the end from the beginning—or know how false things were.

"Why are you not satisfied?" he said, still stormily. "Young Wynkoop is at least *fashionable*. He wears *such* stylish mits and *faultless* gloves. What more can you want?—Oh! damnation!" and he seemed quite choked with his own passion.

"Oh, my husband!" I cried, seizing his hands, "do not accuse me now—I am crushed already. Do you know what the doctor says of Charles?" And the agony seemed too much for me. I had never fainted before; but all these troubles seemed to come over me like a black cloud—a hand of iron grasped my heart. The pulse stopped. Ah! this was death—welcome death. Anywhere—anywhere—out of this miserable world.

No! it was not death! The world dawned on me again.

Heavy crimson curtains hung before the windows and shut out the cold wind. A cheerful fire of anthracite burned in the low grate—a heap of live coals against the polished steel—and the glow permeated the room with its cushioned, crimson seats and lounges—its vases of sculptured alabaster—its copies of antique sculpture and bronzes—its old majolica and treasures of Sevres and and Dresden. A refined air that spoke of cultivated tastes was over all. As I sat by the fire, with a book in my hand—the great mirror reflected me—a tall, elegant-looking woman, with rather cold, steel-blue eyes and blue-black hair—a somewhat square jaw and a hard, set expression. I was not reading, but thinking in a troubled way. The fire-light played over my rich velvet dress and kindled the solitaire diamond on my hand to a sea of flame.

I was thinking of my husband. I had a sort of half-memory that I did not often occupy myself in that way, but this time it intimately concerned myself. What could be the matter with him? He had grown moody—he muttered odd things in his sleep—and last, but not least, he had refused me money. I would have an explanation that very night. I was not going to submit to it. He came in while I was resolving this—looking paler than usual, and worn and haggard. There was a wildness in his eyes, too, which I had never seen before.

"Up yet, Margaret?" he said.

"Yes; I want to talk to you about this party. Mr. Terhune, you were not serious this morning?"

He pressed his hands over his forehead once as if to smooth away the nervous contraction that worked there.

"Serious?—yes—serious as—death," he muttered, as if at a loss for a comparison.

"Because I could not believe it, Walter. The great banker, Terhune, short of funds! We always have a grand crush, New Years'—so—I ordered the cards this morning."

"Do you know, Margaret, your grand crushes have crushed your husband—body and soul—for New Years', did you say?—very well, it makes no difference now."

He seemed wandering, but I recalled him. "I'm glad you've grown rational, Walter; this morning you talked so different."

"This morning I was fool enough to dream that my wife would be my stay and comfort. I see my mistake now; all is gone—all——"

I grew really anxious. "What is gone?" I cried.

"We are gone to smash. The great house of Terhune will be closed in a few days. Can you understand?"

It was hard to believe. I thought it the frenzy of fever. "You are sick," I said, "you rave."

"You will see," he said; "this house will be sold over us; piece by piece of these treasures will pass into strangers' hands. They will let you keep your clothes, madam; comfort yourself with them!"

"You seem to reproach me," I answered angrily. "Am I to blame for the failure?"

He looked at me with an expression of pain. "I might tell you of extravagance, Margaret—of routs and balls—of jewels fit for a princess."

"Yes, that is like you men," I answered, feeling my face grow hot; "it is so sweet to throw the blame on the weaker side. You have speculated wildly; it must be so, Walter. It is a sin—an awful crime; think of the children."

"I do think of them," he murmured. "I have thought till my brain is on fire."

"It is monstrous," I cried; "how could you venture?—but you did not think of us. It is a sort of insanity, I believe—that possesses you speculators—a mental dram-drinking."

"Let us forgive one another, Margaret," he said, bearing my reproaches meekly. "We have reason."

But I was too proud and angry—too stunned by the news I heard—to answer. I rushed up to my own room in a storm of rage. I, the fashionable—the courted—the copied—to fall from my high estate. I, to leave all the splendor which we had gathered about us—to go in some odious little bye-street to live, perhaps on one floor—with the odor of poor people's dinners filling the halls—to be forgotten by my countless friends! Ah! I knew the world well enough for that—yet valued its fickle friendship. What would life be worth? I thought only of myself, and of the children too young yet to know their loss—my peerless darlings, to be thrown with common little ones—to have no advantages! Oh! how the thoughts surged over me, and left me still wild—despairing, rebellious! At last, I wore myself out pacing the floor so wildly. How silent it was in the house—a great hush seemed to fall on everything. The clock ticked madly on the mantel. It was one o'clock, and I began to wonder vaguely what had become of Walter.

Angry yet, with no softening thought in my heart—as if he had, with fell purpose, done me a great wrong—I went down stairs; strange, the gas was out. I opened the parlor-door and called, impatiently, "Walter, do you mean to stay here all night?"

No answer. I groped my way a little. There were matches near the mantelpiece. A Dresden shepherdess held a basketful. I knocked them over in my blind way, and, stooping to pick them up, touched—oh, my God!—a dead face—not rigid yet, but clammy and cold.

I did not scream: I was too paralyzed for that. I wonder how I picked up the matches and lit the gas with that shuddering horror shaking me from head to foot. How I turned to look. Dead! Yes, there he lay—my husband. A ghastly cut from ear to ear had loosed life's burdens, which he had found too heavy to bear. I remembered my cold and angry words. I had given him no comfort when he came home crushed, wild with misfortune. I had shared his brilliant days. I recalled how he had lavished all on me, and I had shrank from the days of sorrow—I who should have been his dearest stay. No wonder death seemed less bitter to him than life.

"Oh, Walter—oh, my husband," I cried, throwing myself down by him, and kissing the rigid hands. "Oh, come back—we will be happy, spite of all. What is it all to me if I have lost you? Oh, God, have pity!"

But those rigid lips made no answer to my cry, and God does not open the gates of Death for mortal prayer, that the traveler once departed from that bourne may return. I felt something in that rigid hand—a scrap of paper! I seized it read, although my brain was on fire, and the letters swam in a white mist.

"Margaret, my wife," it read, "perhaps you will forgive me now, and teach the little ones to think of me kindly. I cannot live; I cannot bear your reproaches, together with my other misfortunes. I am a coward to escape it all in this way. If you had borne up, I might have had courage too. We might have struggled together. But I see you are not made of heroic stuff. Your taunts have stung me to the heart. I hope there is rest in the grave. God forgive me.

"WALTER TERHUNE."

"Oh, God forgive *me?*" I shrieked, as I threw myself by his side, "I have murdered him. My heartless words gave the fatal stab. Oh, my darling—my darling!"

My cries seemed to rouse the house. I heard footsteps hurrying in, but sight and sense seemed to swoon away in the great flood of anguish that suaged over me. Then I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Why, poor little woman," said a cheery voice, "has she fallen asleep over her work?"

I opened my eyes, and saw John's kind face bending over me with a smile. I looked about in bewilderment. Yes! there was the frill of little half-worn garments which had served as a pillow rendered somewhat uncomfortable by buttons.

I seized my husband's hands, to make sure that I did not float out again into the sea of phantoms where I had been wandering.

"Oh, John! is it really you," I cried. "I am the happiest woman in the world."

"Indeed," he said, quizically. "You were in a different mood this morning."

"I know I was impious then," I said. "I dared to believe that God's ways were unequal, that some had all the roses, while we had all the thorns. But I've learned better now, since I've been in my neighbor's shoes."

He looked at me wonderingly, then said, "How sound asleep you were, Sue, not to hear me, or the man who brought the parcels."

"The parcels," I cried, looking about. Yes! There they were, sundry brown paper parcels, very suggestive in appearance.

"Have you no curiosity, little woman?" he asked, as I silently regarded them.

His face looked beaming. "The little ones will have a rare Christmas after all," he went on. "Did you not wonder that I stayed so late, dear. Well, I met my old employer as I was sauntering home moodily, looking at happier fathers in the crowded toy stores. He has come back from Cincinnati, and is going to open at the old stand. "Have you a mind to come back, John?" he asked. "A mind," I cried; "and I think I made a baby of myself, then and there. You know what a generous soul old Latham is. I told him the whole story, and the dear old fellow insisted on going into a most gorgeous 'Paradise for Infants,' near by, and sending a memento to the children. Endless toys, there they are. And then a Christmas dinner, a turkey bursting its skin with fatness, and here *it* is, and plums, and sugar and citron, and here *they* all are."

Oh, John," I gasped, half believing that these were phantoms which would vanish too, not sure yet that I stood in my own shoes, "how happy I am."

"The best of it is, I am taken as head clerk, and we'll have twice as much to live on this year, and it's a pleasure to serve such a man. God bless old Latham, say I. How little we dreamed of this this morning when we were in such doleful dumps. Eh, Sue!"

Such a prayer of thankfulness went up from my heart as I never uttered before, but I could not speak.

We went up together to the nursery, where the little ones lay. Meg with the pearly tear yet glittering on her long golden eyelashes. I searched out the gayest and longest stockings, and, with many happy whispers, we filled them, till they were distorted, and shapeless with strange lumps. But there were quantities of things which no stocking could hold. There was the great waxen doll for Meg with hair golden as her own, and a far more complete wardrobe. There were balls and tops and small velocipedes, and a soft, wooly sheep for my tiniest little lamb, who lay with his rosy little feet all bare on the pillow, and his flossy little head at the wrong end of the bed. What a happy tumult there would be in the morning to be sure.

I glanced out of my window before I went to bed. There stood the three great houses, with their lights and lace curtains, and hanging flower-baskets. It made no difference that the tragedies I had dreamed were only visions. I knew that in each one some sorrow lurked, some thorn stung, some drop of bitterness flavored each cup. For it must be so with all the draughts of earth. And I thanked God fervently that I was not in "my neighbor's shoes."

Wit and Humor.

THE chains of habit are generally too small to be felt till they are too strong to be broken.—*Dr. Johnson.*

IT is a mortifying reflection for any man to consider what he has done, compared with what he might have done.

MEN often attempt, by the light of reason, to discover the mysteries of eternity. They might as well hold up a candle to see the stars.

HURRY and cunning are the two apprentices of dispatch and skill; but neither of them ever learn their master's trade.—*Colton.*

GOOD words are like dew-drops—they fall silently, but who can tell their effect?

DORABELLA, who reads the papers, thinks it nothing wonderful that the Ring should be in arrears. She says she's had rings in 'er ears ever since she was seven years old.

JOSH BILLINGS says: "Most men will concede that it looks foolish to see a boy draggin' a heavy sled up-hill for the fleetin' pleasure of ridin' down again. Bnt it appears to me that the boy is a sage by the side of a young man who works hard all the week, and drinks up his wages on Saturday night."

GENEROSITY during life is a very different thing from generosity in the hour of death; one proceeds from genuine liberty and benevolence; the other from pride or fear.

THE minds of some people are like the pupil of the human eye, and contract themselves the more the stronger light there is shed upon them.—*Thos. Moore.*

A WRITER, describing the exodus from Eden, says: "The devil drove woman out of Paradise, but he could not drive Paradise out of woman."

"THE best policy"—That with the largest bonus.

SOME "horrid" man says that in the present style of dressing young ladies' hair it is hard to tell which is switch.

A YOUNG lady writes to a friend: "Miss Smith is staying with us. We went out sailing yesterday. I didn't know there was so much in her."

"THE best way to find out is to put a ring on it," was the blushing reply of a young woman to the remark of her lover that he hoped her "hand was not counterfeit."

AN old lady thinks the Bonds must be a family of strong religious instincts, because she hears of many of them being converted.